

National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Report and Consultation

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Consultation title:	National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce

1. Are you responding as: (please tick one box)

- (a) an individual? (go to 2a/b)
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Yes

No

Consultation Questions from Within Main Report

For convenience the consultation questions from within the main Review Report are grouped together in this annex. The page numbers have been provided to help you refer back to the sections of the main report these questions came from.

Roles and Responsibilities (Section 2: pages 10 ~ 16)

The main challenge identified in this section is how to create a coherent early years and childcare workforce which shares common roles and responsibilities, and which has a shared understanding of its contribution to securing the best outcomes for children.

1. What are the barriers to developing a coherent early years and childcare workforce with a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities? How can they be overcome?

One of the main barriers to developing a coherent early years and childcare workforce is a lack of understanding about the respective parts of the wider children's workforce by its component parts. There is internal resistance to integration in some parts of the workforce which may make a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities more difficult. This may be addressed by developing a communications strategy to enable staff to see how their part of the workforce links to the wider workforce, and to promote the importance of specialist areas such as playwork. Work placements could also be important in giving individuals the opportunity to gain experience of other settings.

Another barrier would be a lack of understanding of the inter-relationship between the different parts of the children's workforce by other organisations out with the sector. This could include careers advisors, Job Centre Plus etc. One of the ways in which this could be overcome could be to develop and implement a targeted communications strategy to relay the inter-connectedness of the sector to external organisations, whilst highlighting the importance of specialist areas such as Playwork. The development of materials explaining the Roles and Responsibilities Framework, and the rationale behind it, could be useful here.

It is important for staff within the wider children's workforce to have an accurate understanding of play and playwork.

'Play' is defined as 'children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental part of healthy development.'

'Playwork' is defined both as 'a methodology - a distinct way of working with children, and a service; delivered by adults for children, either through people, places or a combination of both.'

The existence of separate qualification routes for 'specialisms' could also be a barrier. It is important to protect specialist areas such as Playwork and to recognise their ethos and value within the Roles and Responsibilities Framework, but there is also a need to link these together more closely to the wider children's workforce. One of the ways this barrier can be overcome is to communicate to individuals that developing a coherent workforce will increase their range of skills whilst preserving the ethos of specialist areas such as Playwork.

Another way to address this would be to recognise that youth work also links closely to childcare and playwork, and that youth work should be considered within the wider children's workforce.

The main proposal is to develop a single shared framework of roles and responsibilities for the early years and childcare workforce that is based on the vision for children and young people.

2. To what extent does the Roles and Responsibilities Framework provide a useful basis for developing a shared professional identity across the early years and childcare workforce, and for driving forward the integrated working agenda?

The Roles and Responsibilities Framework is a useful starting point in developing a shared professional identity, but it is important that the ethos of all specialist areas such as Playwork are captured here. If the framework accurately captures all of the diverse roles and responsibilities within the wider children's workforce then it will be an important tool in developing this identity.

There is a concern amongst playworkers that the current version of the Roles and Responsibilities Framework does not capture the ethos of play adequately. For example, under the 'Achieving' category the core responsibility is to create 'an environment and resources to build each child's skills, confidence and self-esteem'. Play is not mentioned here, despite the fact that it has a crucial role to play in meeting this responsibility. Research has shown that play is effective in building a child's skills, confidence and self-esteem.

The 'Active' category does mention play but it is in the context of activities. Play is not an activity driven process with defined outcomes but is self-directed, freely chosen and intrinsically motivated. Perhaps the Core Responsibility could be changed to read 'Encouraging each child's participation in a range of activities and play opportunities.' Perhaps reflective practice could also be included here.

In relation to the 'Organisational Factors' perhaps something could be added about managers allowing individuals to gain experience of working in other parts of the wider children's workforce. This could then be linked to planning for Continuing Professional Development. The closer collaboration across boundaries is welcome.

Managers must rightly ensure that staff understand how their service fits into the wider children's workforce, but this must first be communicated to managers. Perhaps the SSSC and SkillsActive could have a role to play here in communicating the importance of this to managers. This is echoed in SkillsActive's 'Scottish Implementation Plan for Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-2011'.

3. Does the Roles and Responsibilities Framework reflect what workers in all sectors of the workforce are likely to be doing as services develop over the coming years?

See comments in Question 2 (above). There may be a need to review and refine this Framework, given the timescales for the implementation of the Review. Therefore, the Framework should be flexible enough to accommodate these incremental changes. This is particularly important as services become more integrated.

4. Is the Roles and Responsibilities Framework a useful basis for developing professional qualifications in the sector?

The Framework is only useful for developing professional qualifications if it adequately reflects all of the specialist areas within the children's workforce. The concern of playworkers is that there may now be limited time to influence the content of this Framework. The SSSC has been tasked with establishing a Single Qualifications Framework by September 2007, which is to be based on this Roles and Responsibilities Framework. As this work is progressing based on the content of the Roles and Responsibilities Framework as it stands, there is a concern that there is limited opportunity to influence the content of the Framework or the Qualifications Framework which is arising from it. If the Roles and Responsibilities

Framework does not adequately reflect the roles of Playworkers, then there is a risk that any Qualifications Framework, which is derived from it, may not capture the ethos of Playwork as closely as it might.

Career Pathways (Section 3: pages 17 ~ 22)

This section highlights some of the current barriers to career pathways in early years and childcare e.g. qualification structures, cultural differences or misconceptions across the different parts of the workforce, wide differences in pay and conditions between parts of the sector, and a lack of advice about career development opportunities.

5. How accurately does this reflect career pathways in the early years and childcare sector at the moment?

This section of the Review reflects careers pathways accurately at present. Career progression is currently fragmented, and there is a further issue surrounding the recognition of formal and informal learning.

Career pathways are disjointed with a lack of clear understanding about how individuals can move across boundaries.

The issue of pay and conditions is an important one, as there are discrepancies between the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is currently easier for individuals to move vertically within specific fields rather than laterally into different service settings.

The proposals are high level principles that should enable workers to pursue a career pathway while ensuring that employers have the flexibility to deliver services to meet local circumstances.

6. How effective will these proposals be in promoting career pathways across the different parts of the early years and childcare sector, and more widely?

It is important to have transparent and flexible career pathways. However, there is a need for a shared understanding and recognition of qualifications and experience in other parts of the sector. Playwork, for example, has been linked with Youth and Community work at degree level in England. English universities combine these, as youth work is concerned with developing social skills in an informal manner for older children. This route is as clear a pathway for playworkers as those available for individuals working with younger children.

A Communications Strategy would be important here and this is an issue which the Playwork sector has highlighted in the 'Scottish Implementation Plan for Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-2011'. The involvement of key agencies or employers in integrated qualifications development would be important here, so that they have an understanding of the process and the outcomes of that process.

The Review mentions that there is a need to 'understand and recognise the existence of transferable skills'. Perhaps one way in which this could be done effectively would be to ensure that formal and/or informal learning is either captured on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) or as eligible Continuing Professional Development (CPD) recognised by the SSSC.

Pay and conditions is another area of importance to playworkers. This is an area which is not addressed adequately in the National Review or the Ministerial response, and is an area which SkillsActive/PETC Scotland would like to see being addressed strategically by the Scottish Executive. Increased responsibility and career progression is important for individuals but if this is not matched with increased remuneration then it may become a disincentive. If there is further streamlining across sectoral boundaries, this could facilitate the case for an more equitable pay structure.

SkillsActive/PETC Scotland would support the clear signposting of career opportunities.

The proposal to make this appealing to a wider section of the community is important and links with SkillsActive's Scottish Implementation Plan on Play, which highlights the need to recruit more men and ethnic minorities into the Playwork profession. However, there needs to be some more thought given to how this is to be done. Perhaps closer working with careers advisors in schools, colleges, universities and Job Centres would be important here, so that there are clear recruitment and retention strategies to address gender/ethnic imbalances in the workforce, and a communications plan to raise awareness of the careers pathways which are available.

There is still detail to be resolved here within the 10 year planning timescale.

7. Are there other ways to promote career pathways?

As mentioned above there is a need to raise awareness of career pathways amongst agencies who offer careers advice to potential entrants to the workforce. A communications strategy would be important here in identifying the key organisations to approach, with a clear message relating to career progression opportunities.

However, before this can be implemented effectively there is a need to establish these career routes within the constituent parts of the wider children's workforce. Some thought needs to be given to the equivalency of qualifications, perhaps by listing these on the SCQF or by working with the SSSC so that pieces of formal and/or informal learning are recognised as eligible CPD.

Work experience projects, where individuals have the opportunity to work in different service settings, could be an important way of facilitating future lateral or vertical career progression within the children's workforce. Case studies and examples of best practice where individuals have progressed across perceived or real boundaries would play an important role here.

In England transitional NVQ Level 3 awards have been created to allow Early Years practitioners to move into Playwork and vice versa. Both qualifications have a common core which allow for specialisation. This type of model could facilitate career progression routes in the future within Scotland and is worth closer inspection.

In Scotland the SVQ Level 4 in Early Years and Playwork qualifications allow for specialisation in either area. Individuals can pick a strand in which to specialise and then choose the other strand to move into another area. This also takes place in the new HNC structure. It may also be useful to map the National Occupational Standards in Youth Work against the overall framework, so that more pathways become available.

Qualifications, Training and Development (Section 4: pages 23 ~ 32)

This section outlines the case for a more integrated qualification structure which supports career pathways and integrated working.

8. What are your views on a single qualifications framework with a shared base (or "common core") for the whole early years and childcare sector? (this includes early years workers, out of school care workers, playworkers, childminders and others)

SkillsActive and PETC Scotland would be largely supportive of this move to professionalise the workforce, as this is a key theme in the Scottish 'Implementation Plan for Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-11'. However, there would need to be appropriate levels of input from playwork employers, training providers and SkillsActive's Playwork and Technical Units in the development of this 'common core'. This shared base must reflect core competencies which are crucial to the skills required by playworkers.

Some comparative study could be made to similar initiatives in other parts of the UK, and in particular to the transitional modules developed by SkillsActive to allow progression from Early Years into Playwork and vice versa.

The Review proposes a case for higher levels of qualification in the early years and childcare workforce.

9. The Review proposes that services should be led by SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or work-based equivalent) qualified professionals? Should it be higher than SCQF level 9? Why?

SkillsActive and PETC Scotland are supportive of professionalisation, but this must be set within the context of the current Playwork environment and the likely impact of this move to a degree led profession on the sector. There is a concern amongst playworkers that they are already struggling to meet current registration requirements in relation to qualifications and that this move may make it more difficult to 'catch up.' We would welcome clearer direction from the Scottish Executive on timescales for this implementation for the Playwork sector, and also some comment on a strategic deployment of funding to support this.

However, we welcome the move to recognise prior learning so that managers will not need to start 'from scratch', but will be able to build on the learning and experience which they have acquired. The process of credit transfer and recognition of formal and informal learning needs further work, and the process should be transparent and recognised by all within the wider Children's workforce as 'fit for purpose'.

We would not advocate raising the level higher than SCQF Level 9, as this may result in experienced playworkers leaving the profession. There must be more thought given to pay and conditions, as many managers in Playwork settings may be reluctant to take on additional qualifications if this is not matched with increased financial remuneration. There was also a concern that part-time workers may be reluctant to pursue a Level 9 qualification.

The Executive should be aware that many small play groups and out of school care settings are run by voluntary committees and that finding the money to pay increased salaries commensurate with higher qualification levels would prove very difficult. In addition staff are often part-time, and train outwith normal working hours. They would therefore need to be paid for these additional hours. If training takes place during work hours organisations will need to backfill the posts, which again has financial implications. To ensure good quality provision and freedom of choice for parents the Executive would need to channel funding to these groups.

In one focus group participants observed that Care Commission regulations state that where several groups or 'clusters' are being managed peripatetically, the numbers on the register should not exceed 20. The group felt that this was unfair and unworkable and that cases should be treated on a more flexible basis. This is particularly important for out of school care groups and those playgroups serving more rural areas. It was agreed that whilst all were in favour of improving the qualifications of the work force such inflexibility may cause the demise of many such groups or force groups to de-register and operate for a 2 hour period. Concerns were also expressed about the 'overall' attitude and perceived inflexibility of the Care Commission in general.

The Review proposes that there should be higher levels of qualification for practitioners and support workers.

10. Many workers will develop their skills and knowledge through continuing professional development. What are the important features of a CPD framework for the early years and childcare workforce?

Any CPD framework should be linked to the qualifications requirements on the SSSC's registration framework. As mentioned above it should also be transparent, flexible and recognised as 'fit for purpose' by all parts of the children's workforce. The benefits of CPD for lateral and vertical career progression should be made clear and a communications strategy would be important in achieving this.

Again if this is linked to RPL then it will make it easier for playworkers to achieve the qualification requirements set by the SSSC. We also welcome the move to have the flexibility to add specialist skill sets such as Playwork. In addition it may be appropriate to link some CPD opportunities to the SCQF and to develop a clear map or process for linking CPD to the Single Qualifications Framework, for the purposes of credit transfer and RPL. CPD could also be checked regularly by employers or even built into the conditions of employment. The quality and value of CPD or Post Registration Training and Employment needs to be established.

One focus group felt that CPD would be useful in adding to the different qualifications staff have as they move across sectors. However, relevant training and qualifications would need to be accessible and affordable - perhaps ILAs could be changed to meet some of these CPD requirements.

Recruitment and Retention (Section 5: pages 33 ~ 40)

This section makes a case for improving the status of working in early years and childcare as the fundamental step to improving recruitment and retention of staff.

11. How accurately does the report reflect the issues that affect the status of work in early years and childcare sector at the moment?

The report reflects the issues affecting the status of work in the early years and childcare sector in an accurate light. Many of these findings echo the outcomes of SkillsActive's Sector Skills Agreement process. This research highlighted the fact that the playwork sector does not have a distinct professional identity and is characterised by low pay, which has an effect on the recruitment and retention of staff. The Playwork sector is predominantly female with under-representation from ethnic minorities.

The Sector Skills Agreement research also highlighted that 60% of staff in the Playwork sector hold Childcare qualifications at SVQ L3 (SCQF Level 6) or above. A further 13% have qualifications below this level. Of this group 26% have no formal qualifications but 40% are working towards one.

There is a clear need to raise the status of Playwork as a profession in its own right, although linked to the wider Children's workforce. This move to professionalisation is one of the key themes in SkillsActive's Scottish 'Implementation Plan for Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-11', and outlines the importance of developing a professional identity which accurately reflects the levels of responsibility and importance that workers have in child development.

12. Are there factors other than status that affect recruitment and retention of staff?

One of the main factors affecting recruitment and retention of staff is that of pay and conditions. There is a risk that the introduction of higher levels of qualifications which are not overtly linked to increased remuneration may result in experienced managers choosing to leave the Playwork sector. Therefore although higher qualifications will improve the status of the workforce it may have an adverse affect on retention within the workforce in the short to medium term.

This is recognised in the Review although there are no clear strategies to address this issue. In addition, although £5 million has been pledged to the Early Years sector to support the implementation of the findings of this review, there has been no financial commitment to support this for the Playwork sector. SkillsActive and PETC Scotland would like to see more coherent and strategic thinking on the issue of pay and conditions, so that the commendable move to professionalisation is not overshadowed by the lack of incentives for managers and their staff to raise their skills levels.

In addition not-for-profit organisations such as Out of School Care have minimum terms and conditions for staff to keep childcare affordable. In order to improve retention, terms and conditions would need to be improved, with a likely increase in the cost of childcare as a result.

The Review proposes a number of ways to improve the status of the workforce, e.g. increasing professionalisation of the workforce (more coherent identity to the workforce, increased qualification expectations), and awareness raising about the value of working in the sector and the skill involved.

13. To what extent do you think that the proposals in the Review improve the status of the early years and childcare workforce?

SkillsActive and PETC Scotland would broadly welcome many of the proposals in the Review to improve the status of the early years and childcare workforce. Many of these link to our

Scottish 'Implementation Plan for Quality Training, Quality Play 2006-11'. Professionalisation, awareness raising exercises and the sharing of best practice are all areas which we would fully support. More work clearly needs to be done to raise awareness of different parts of the sector by each of its component parts, and similarly it is important to improve the status of Playwork and other parts of the children's workforce amongst careers advisors, parents, and potential new recruits.

14. How do we ensure the sharing of good practice on recruitment and retention?

There are a number of ways in which good practice could be shared. Firstly, case studies could be compiled on examples of best practice relating to recruitment and retention of staff. Informal or formal cross-sector working groups could be set up to research current practice, share best practice and identify improved ways of working in this area. Perhaps some of these findings could be added to the SSSC's or SkillsActive's websites or disseminated through a joint seminar.

Closer working with careers advice agencies, central and local government also could be an important way of identifying examples of best practice in relation to recruitment and retention.

Retention is an area of concern for playworkers, especially in relation to part-time workers. Staff can often receive training and then move on into other jobs. This is linked to the wider issue of parity of pay and conditions across the wider children's workforce.

15. How do you think we can attract men and other under represented groups into the sector?

In relation to redressing the gender imbalance it will be important to highlight the success of existing initiatives such as the 'Men in Childcare' project in Edinburgh and to promote the importance of male role modelling to children's development to staff within the children's workforce. Perhaps an element of culture change is required within work settings. Recruitment campaigns may also need to be developed to promote early years and playwork as professions where men and ethnic minorities can play an important role. Such campaigns have been successful in encouraging female entrants into the construction industry and perhaps the SSSC and SkillsActive could have a role in making these careers opportunities more appealing to men.

There is also a need to change perceptions or attitudes which may be held by parents or the general public in relation to men working with children. A marketing campaign to change attitudes by promoting the benefits of male role modelling to children would be important here. This campaign could also aim to change perceived stereotypes about who works with children, and promote early years and/or playwork as careers to under represented groups.

Playwork employers feel that men fit well into Playwork settings. The environment often involves enabling an experience such as risky, adventurous or messy play with outdoor challenges. Barriers in this area would be the part-time working hours. One of the ways in which this could be addressed would be to link playwork to youth work. This would increase the number of workable hours and make the sector more attractive to men.

Workforce Planning (Section 6: pages 41 ~ 46)

This section outlines the case for all organisations to undertake workforce planning now, in order to deliver the type of workforce we will need to deliver services in the future.

16. How accurately does this analysis capture the key challenges that face the early years and childcare sector regarding workforce planning?

This analysis captures the key challenges that face the early years and childcare sector regarding workforce planning, in an accurate manner. There has been little strategic thought given to this on a local or national basis in the past. There is a clear need to simplify career and qualification routes across sectoral boundaries, whilst protecting specialist areas such as playwork.

It should also be noted that one of the key challenges facing the Playwork sector in relation to workforce planning is that of sustainability. Services and play projects are often concerned with short to medium term sustainability and this makes it more difficult to plan for the long-term. There is also a shortage of playwork assessors in Scotland at present, so it would be important to address these wider issues of sustainability of playwork training and service provision within any local and national workforce planning strategies.

In Scotland workforce development funds are not 'ring fenced', and Local Authorities often use it to qualify their own staff first. There needs to be more access to this funding for the voluntary and private sectors, in order to enable them to keep up with the changes proposed in this Review.

17. Considering each of the attributes of workforce planning described in this section, what activities are you aware of that currently take place to help achieve each of them? Do different activities occur at an individual (business) level, local level and national level?

The local Out of School Care Network implement an annual training needs analysis, and identify individuals who require support. The timescales for this training are also identified. However, the most significant barrier to accessing this is often a lack of available funding.

18. What needs to happen at a local level for effective workforce planning to take place? What needs to happen at a national level? Why?

On a local level there needs to be closer interagency working between Childcare Partnerships, employers in early years and playwork, training providers, local enterprise companies (Scottish Enterprise), Local Authorities, and careers services so that provision is planned and executed in a consistent and coherent manner. Perhaps local work groups could be set up, comprised of senior individuals from these agencies, who would address the strategic perspective and ensure that workforce plans are implemented sensibly with a long-term planning horizon. Barriers should be identified and addressed with best practice highlighted. As is suggested in the Review there should also be a pro-active scanning of the future environment in order to plan for changes in policy.

On a national level a similar model could be adopted with the involvement of Sector Skills Councils, the SSSC, Scottish Executive, CosLA, Scottish Enterprise, training providers, employers and other key agencies. There should be a link between local and national planning so that there is a level of integration and synergy between the two. This would enable resources to be combined to achieve common objectives and may help to address the sustainability issue for Playwork employers.

On both national and local levels thought need to be given as to how available financial resources can be made used effectively and consistently to support every part of the early years and playwork sector.

Without this type of local and national workforce planning, we will see a continuation of disjointed strategies and a lack of a clear planning for the early years and childcare sector.

In addition careful thought needs to be given to the impact of local and national strategies on all categories of agencies offering childcare services from voluntarily managed committees to larger organisations.

Early Years and Childcare – A Developing Profession (Section 7: pages 47 ~ 51)

This section sets out the conclusion of the Review which is that we need to build on the existing steps that the sector has been taking towards an even more professional workforce if we are to deliver the best possible services for children and young people.

19. The Review sets out proposals intended to create a single, coherent profession for all those working in early years and childcare. Are there other actions which would support the development of a single profession?

Any move to develop a new profession should recognise the importance of Playwork within it. All of the constituent parts of the early years and childcare workforce need to understand how their distinct ethos are captured and represented within this single profession. Otherwise they may feel as though specialist areas such as playwork could become diluted or overshadowed by other parts of the workforce.

In addition the decision to address the Early Years part of the workforce first and the subsequent allocation of £5million to support this, may undermine this move to develop a single profession, as this effectively splits the workforce between early years and childcare. The lack of clear timescales and funding for the playwork sector exacerbates this issue further.

If the implementation of the findings of this review are to be split between the early years and childcare workforce then it is important that timescales and funding are considered for the entire workforce rather than one part of it.

20. What are your views on the title “pedagogue” within a Scottish context?

The term 'pedagogue' is an unfamiliar term within the Scottish context and as such it is not readily understood by playworkers. If this model is to be adopted in Scotland the rationale behind it should be clearly communicated and a new, more familiar title chosen.

Employers were concerned that there is a missing ethic in the definition of a 'pedagogue'. It is comprised of learning development and should also include a child's leisure and play time. Pedagogues need the skill to allow free, unadulterated play and learn themselves from observation and reflective practice.

21. How would you like to see the early years and childcare workforce named?

There may be a danger of trying to develop a name which covers the wide range of children's services, many of which have very different ethos. It may not be possible to develop a name which accurately or adequately reflects this diversity within a single workforce. Although we support the move towards integration many playwork employers are concerned that the ethos of their sector is becoming diluted within the integrated services agenda. It is our view that a generic name for the workforce may dilute this further.

However, if a generic name is to be chosen one focus group felt that it should be a name that covers all aspects of the different work roles within the wider children's workforce. 'Early Years Childhood and Youth Worker' or 'Childhood and Youth Worker' were suggested as there are overlaps between playwork and youth work. It was felt that such a name would demonstrate the different opportunities, pathways and roles within sectors.